

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

JUN - 1933
U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

THURSDAY, June 15, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Grow Your Own Seasonings." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. D. A.

--0--

If you look back a generation or two to those old-fashioned thrifty housekeepers of earlier days you'll recall that many of these grandmothers and great-grandmothers of ours had herb gardens which were their pride and joy. Many a thrifty woman today has taken up this practice. Some women are even successfully selling the herbs they raise. The thrifty home gardener today is using every little corner of her vegetable patch, her dooryard, her window box or even her flowerbed to tuck in a cutting, a plant or the seed of some useful herb. Thus she has on hand for her own use or for sale thyme, sage, chives, or dill for pickling. Or perhaps she will have sweet marjoram, basil, savory, chervil, or tarragon for vinegar and chilli peppers, or, if she lives in the South, sesame seed. She will have parsley and mint, cress and perhaps some lemon verbena or rose geranium leaves, and probably others of the long and fascinating list of herbs that we cherish for their fragrance and their flavor. Does somebody suggest that these are mere frills? According to the Bureau of Home Economics, they are highly useful and practical additions to the family food supply, especially if the family is short of cash. Different ways of seasoning add variety to low-cost dishes. If you raise your own seasonings, you save expense and are sure of having them fresh. These so-called "frills" often add to the tempting appearance of a dish. A bit of chopped parsley or a sprig of cress, give color to a dish as well as additional flavor.

Since this is gardening time, this is the time to grow your favorite herbs. You can use them fresh during the summer and dry them for winter. Some of these herbs you will plant from seeds, others from cuttings. In the northern part of the United States, this is seed-planting time for herbs and a few cents will buy the seed. Farther south, better use cuttings now or transplant -- perhaps from a neighbor's garden. If you have no garden space, you can grow a few herbs in flower pots or window boxes. Perhaps you'll remember that last fall we suggested growing onion shoots for winter salads or creamed dishes, soups and stews. And we suggested growing these in the window box in your sunny south window. At this season you can grow many other things in flower pots or window boxes. You can grow parsley, basil, mint, watercress, rose geranium, nasturtium, and lemon verbena. The other herbs we have mentioned-- savory, sesame, tarragon, chervil, sage, chives, and dill are best put in the ground, but they need very little space to grow.

Now ways to use these old-fashioned herbs. Sage, thyme and savory make excellent seasonings for stuffings for poultry, for sausages, and for cheeses. Tarragon leaves and dill season vinegars and pickles. Use them also in sauce, especially sauce for fish. Chives give a delicate flavor to sausages, salads and omelets.

No one needs to tell any good housekeeper how to use mint. Mint is delicious in stuffings, especially for stuffed lamb roast; in mint jelly to go with meat; in mint sauce. Mint is also delicious chopped and added to salads and fruit combina-

tions. A sprig of mint makes an attractive garnish for fruit appetizers, fresh fruits, salads and beverages. Mint flavor is a favorite in iced tea, fruit punches and even some chocolate milk drinks.

Basil is a favorite seasoning for soups and stews and for tomato dishes, especially macaroni with tomatoes and cheese. Italian cooks use it also in bean soup.

What about sesame, or bene as it is sometimes called? This is a seed used to flavor cookies or little cakes. Nasturtiums? They are useful as well as decorative. Tender, spring nasturtium stems and leaves are delicious chopped in salads. Later the bright nasturtium petals make pretty decorations for food. And the green, unripe nasturtium seeds make spicy pickles, also nice for salad. As for geranium leaves, old-fashioned housewives used these to flavor cakes and jellies, especially apple jelly. To make a fancy apple jelly--perhaps for a Christmas gift or for a company meal, place a small geranium leaf in the jelly glass as it is being filled and then pour in the hot liquid jelly. Keep the leaves suspended in the jelly with a fork until the jelly is almost cool.

These are some of the more familiar uses of these seasoning plants -- little, inexpensive ways of adding to the variety of commonplace foods. Among the everyday dishes that gain new zest if you season them with herbs are tomato soup, vegetable soup, eggs, and omelets, rice, fish, meat balls, veal or lamb stew and cottage cheese. Which herbs to use and how much of each are a matter of your own taste, but one secret is never use too much. Delicate, elusive flavors are more successful than strong flavors.

A fine sandwich, full of interesting flavor, contains a mixture of chopped cooked mushrooms and eggs with chopped parsley, chervil, chives and sweet basil in equal quantities. You can make another summer sandwich by mixing chopped mint, chervil and cress with the butter before spreading the bread. In white sauce for broiled fish or omelets, chervil, summer savory or chives are good seasoning. Or you may season your sauce with a mixture of chives, parsley, sweet marjoram, and thyme. Use your own ingenuity. Try out a little of this flavor and a little of that. You'll discover many delicious ways to pep up low-cost meals from your own herb garden.

Tomorrow: "More Egg Dishes."

